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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

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Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/182, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report annually to the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council on the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance. The report is also submitted in response to General Assembly resolutions 63/147 and 64/76 and Economic and Social Council resolution 2009/3.

The report describes the major humanitarian trends and challenges over the past year and analyses two thematic issues of current concern: operating in high-risk environments, and vulnerability and its implications for humanitarian response. The report provides an overview of current key processes to improve humanitarian coordination and ends with recommendations for further strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report responds to the requests contained in General Assembly resolutions 64/76 and 63/147 and Economic and Social Council resolution 2009/3. The period covered by the report is June 2009 to May 2010.

II. Overview of humanitarian trends and challenges

2. Globally, humanitarian needs continued to rise, sustained and triggered by armed conflict, natural disasters and global challenges. The latter include adverse weather patterns driven by climate change, the global financial crisis and economic downturn, extreme poverty, resource scarcity, population growth, rapid urbanization and volatile energy prices. While global food prices have decreased since the peaks in 2008, they remain high relative to historic levels, affecting an estimated one billion people. Overall, the consolidated appeals process has requested $7.1 billion for 2010 to provide 48 million people with humanitarian assistance, compared with 43 million people in 2009. Meanwhile, financial pressure on programmes is increasing in a number of humanitarian emergencies, with agencies voicing concern over cuts in their planned aid deliveries.

3. Globally, an estimated 27 million persons were internally displaced by armed conflict. By the end of 2009, 10.4 million refugees had received assistance from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, almost as many as in 2008. In Africa and Asia, where armed conflict continued to ravage communities, the figures for people in both new and protracted situations of internal displacement and seeking refugee status remained alarmingly high. In a number of contexts, humanitarian needs were compounded by a coexistence of armed conflict, natural disasters and global challenges. Humanitarian access continued to be hampered in several conflict-affected emergencies. Continuing violent and deliberate attacks on humanitarian relief personnel remain particularly alarming.

4. A reduced number of disasters associated with natural hazards were recorded in 2009. The Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters reported 328 natural disasters, spread across 111 countries and affecting 113 million people. This marked a significant divergence from the annual average of 392 disasters recorded for the period 2000-2008. However, rather than suggesting a general trend, experts have attributed this reduced incidence of disasters to climate cycle variations, particularly the El Niño effect, leading to an unusually quiet North Atlantic hurricane season in the Caribbean and drought in South Asia. Global temperatures are still predicted to continue to rise — globally, 2009 was even warmer than the previous three years — increasing the likelihood of more frequent extreme weather events in the future. Overall, it is important to note that better preparedness, based on clear national disaster management plans and improved disaster management capacities, was the determining factor in improving disaster response and averting severe economic damage. For 2009, estimates of economic costs related to disasters averaged between $35 and $50 billion, again a significant divergence from the 2000-2008 average of $94 billion.

A. Disasters associated with natural hazards

5. The first half of 2010 was marked by several massive earthquakes affecting millions of people and causing billions of dollars of damage. In Haiti, 3 million people were affected by a 7.0 magnitude earthquake that struck on 12 January. According to the Government, over 220,000 people were killed, another 300,000 were injured and over 1.5 million people were displaced. The economic damage is estimated at $7.8 billion, approximately 120 per cent of Haiti's 2009 gross domestic product. Five months after the earthquake, tens of thousands of families continue to live in temporary shelters with inadequate sanitary conditions. Emergency assistance continues to be needed, despite a massive international response and outpouring of goodwill and resources from all around the world.

6. On 27 February 2010, an 8.8 magnitude earthquake hit Chile, affecting over 2 million people and causing 486 deaths. Government sources reported $30 billion in damages to housing, health, education, livelihoods and infrastructure. In China, a 7.1 magnitude earthquake struck Qinghai province on 14 April 2010. Official figures reported 2,200 people dead, 12,135 people injured and another 70 missing. The Governments of both Chile and China responded rapidly to their respective natural disasters by deploying relief and assessment teams, temporary shelter materials, food, medicine and water to the affected areas, with assistance from the international community. Earthquakes on a similar scale affected the Pacific region in September 2009, including two consecutive earthquakes in Indonesia, which affected 2.5 million people, causing 1,100 casualties, displacing 469,000 people, and damaging 114,000 houses.

7. Despite a below average incidence of tropical cyclones in 2009, three consecutive typhoons struck the Philippines in September and October, affecting over 10 million people, of whom an estimated 700,000 were displaced. Despite a robust response by the Government, the magnitude, sequence and impact of the typhoons overstretched national capacities, leading the Philippines to appeal for international humanitarian assistance. In the Caribbean region, the combined effects of Hurricane Ida and a low pressure system off the Pacific coast led in November to unprecedented heavy rainfall in El Salvador, triggering severe flooding affecting more than 75,000 people, killing 198 and causing severe damage to infrastructure. Guatemala suffered from drought and continuing high food prices, causing some 136,000 families to require assistance in the areas of nutrition, agriculture and health.

8. Erratic rain patterns affected millions of people in several regions of the world. Heavy rains and floods affected approximately 800,000 people in West Africa: Burkina Faso and Senegal were particularly badly affected, while Benin, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea and Mauritania also suffered. The region was also affected by drought. Poor rainfall has devastated agriculture and pastoral production in Chad as well as the Niger, where 2.5 and 7.8 million people, respectively, are suffering from severe or moderate food insecurity. In Southern Africa, more than 3 million people continued to struggle to meet their basic food needs as a result of a poor 2008/2009 agricultural season and low purchasing power. In March 2010, tropical cyclone Hubert affected some 370,000 people in the region, particularly in Madagascar.

9. Climatic variability, insecurity and limited access for humanitarian actors continued to affect the Horn of Africa, where an estimated 23 million people remain in need of emergency assistance. Recurrent drought and food insecurity affected approximately 80 per cent of the population in Eritrea and 5.2 million people in Ethiopia. Soaring food prices and localized access restrictions for humanitarian organizations have exacerbated the vulnerability of the affected populations in both countries. Further complicating the situation in Ethiopia is continued localized displacement due to community-level conflict over administrative boundaries, natural resources and basic infrastructure, as well as the continued influx of a large number of refugees from Eritrea, Somalia and the Sudan. In Kenya, 5.8 million people required food aid owing to recurrent poor rainy seasons. Recovery remained difficult due to high food market prices; widespread livestock losses; insecurity in pastoral areas; and continued unpredictable weather conditions.

10. Upon request from Governments, United Nations disaster assessment and coordination missions were deployed in response to emergencies in Albania, Benin, Burkina Faso, China, the Comoros, the Cook Islands, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Haiti, Indonesia, Nicaragua, the Philippines, Samoa and Ukraine during the reporting period. The international humanitarian system issued six flash appeals in response to natural disasters, of which four were climate-related. Data from the Financial Tracking Service show that, to date, appeals for natural disasters received significantly less funding, on average, than appeals for complex emergencies. This imbalance is by and large also reflected in the international response to natural disasters, which tends to be less robust than the response to armed conflicts, mobilizing less international political and financial engagement and garnering shorter attention spans, although the disaster in Haiti was clearly an exception.

B. Complex emergencies

11. Protracted conflict and insecurity have increased humanitarian needs in a number of complex emergencies. Gaining safe, unimpeded and timely access to affected communities remained a key challenge for humanitarian actors as a result of targeted attacks on humanitarian personnel and insecurity. The potential drawdown of peacekeeping missions in several contexts such as in the Central African Republic, Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo is expected to pose further challenges to affected communities and humanitarian operations, including on access, security, protection of civilians and logistics.

12. Africa continued to suffer from several conflicts. In Somalia 3.2 million people, including 1.4 million internally displaced persons and 1.5 million malnourished children, are in need of humanitarian assistance, because of the combined effects of prolonged conflict and drought in some areas. Despite efforts to negotiate with local armed groups for humanitarian access, military hostilities, attacks on humanitarian relief personnel and assets and bureaucratic impediments forced many organizations to withdraw or temporarily suspend activities in certain areas, effectively preventing longer-term programming. In 2009, there were 89 security incidents directed at humanitarian relief personnel and assets, including the killing of 10 humanitarian relief personnel, the abduction of 7 others and a further 10 being held in captivity. The decrease in security incidents (from 154 in 2008) is largely due to a reduced United Nations and non-governmental organization

(NGO) presence in some areas and a shift in the type of incident to attacks targeting humanitarian infrastructure, assets and supplies.

13. In the Sudan's Darfur region more than 2 million people remained displaced. While humanitarian programmes began to include more early recovery programmes, insecurity continued to plague humanitarian actors. A rising trend of kidnappings was particularly alarming. Eight international aid workers and six members of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) were abducted and subsequently released. In the south of the Sudan, continued intertribal clashes and attacks by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) caused more than 2,000 casualties and displaced an estimated 440,000 people. Of these, 83,000 were displaced by LRA attacks, who showed their usual brutality and habit of abducting children for recruitment. A total of 4.3 million people are affected by food insecurity, aggravated by poor rains, while weak health service coverage left millions vulnerable to communicable diseases and with unmet health needs, particularly in the field of maternal health. Humanitarian access continued to be limited in many parts of the country due to complex logistics and the implementation of ad hoc procedures governing relief operations, particularly affecting NGOs in the north of the Sudan.

14. The humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly in North and South Kivu, remained extremely worrying. Human rights violations continued to be highly prevalent and included sexual and gender-based violence, looting, forced labour and the recruitment of child soldiers. A total of 1.9 million people remain internally displaced. Humanitarian access to the affected populations continued to be impeded due to insecurity, criminally motivated attacks against humanitarian actors and poor or non-existent road infrastructure. In Orientale Province, LRA attacks displaced 300,000 people, while in the Equateur Province, the displacement of 200,000 people occurred as a result of local ethnic conflicts, sending 118,000 people into the Congo and more than 18,000 into the Central African Republic.

15. In the Central African Republic, despite some progress towards peace, humanitarian needs remain high. In some of the affected areas, 16 per cent of children aged under 5 years are malnourished and 6.6 per cent are severely malnourished. Widespread insecurity and targeting of civilians increased the number of refugees to over 137,000 and the number of internally displaced persons to some 162,000. Of the refugees, 15,000 fled to neighbouring Chad, where the absence of large-scale fighting had led to a slightly improved overall humanitarian situation, despite the confirmed presence of 250,000 refugees and 180,000 internally displaced persons. However, significant challenges remain due to chronic insecurity, both in the Central African Republic and Chad, where criminality and banditry significantly restricted humanitarian access to communities in need.

16. Complex emergencies continued to affect millions in Asia. In Afghanistan, the humanitarian situation remained alarming due to a combination of continued armed conflict, food insecurity and natural disasters. Some 290,000 persons were estimated to be displaced internally. Significantly more civilians were killed in 2009 than in previous years, with 67 per cent of the casualties attributed to armed opposition groups. Despite a good harvest in 2009, over 7 million Afghans remained in a situation of food insecurity, largely as a result of restricted access to markets and the overall low purchasing power of ordinary households. Floods and earthquakes

destroyed thousands of houses and farmlands. Meanwhile, the humanitarian response was significantly hampered by insecurity, including attacks against humanitarian workers.

17. In Pakistan, over 2.5 million people continued to be in need of humanitarian assistance. While some 2 million internally displaced persons returned home, over 1 million people remain displaced. While the majority of the displaced have found shelter with host families, 120,000 persons remain in camps. The ability to provide humanitarian assistance was significantly reduced owing to insecurity and deliberate attacks on humanitarian relief personnel. During the reporting period, 18 humanitarian personnel were killed (including 12 United Nations staff members), and many others were injured.

18. In Gaza, the Israeli blockade imposed since 2007 continued to exacerbate humanitarian needs. Food insecurity affected over 60 per cent of households. Recovery from the damage caused by Israel's "Cast Lead" military offensive in January 2009 was severely hampered because of continued restrictions on the import of construction materials. Together with the Emergency Relief Coordinator, the Secretary-General repeatedly urged the lifting of the blockade on Gaza and the free movement of humanitarian and commercial goods, including supplies for humanitarian projects. In the West Bank, access by Palestinians to farmland and resources continued to be limited by the combination of the Wall, settlements and closures. Continued home demolitions displaced 262 Palestinians in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem. The reporting period saw 49 Palestinian fatalities and 1,106 injuries in the occupied Palestinian territories caused by Israeli military activity and settler violence. Palestinian attacks, including indiscriminate launching of rocket fire, caused 5 Israeli fatalities and 174 injuries in the West Bank and Gaza, as well as one foreign casualty in southern Israel.

19. In Iraq, reduced levels of violence and improved Government capacity have contributed to a gradual stabilization of the humanitarian situation. However, 2.8 million Iraqis remain internally displaced, while 1.7 million Iraqis still seek refuge abroad. The current humanitarian situation in many parts of the country is shaped by a legacy of sanctions, conflict, underdevelopment and neglect. Lack of water, shelter, food, protection, as well as access to education and health care require a continued humanitarian response.

20. The situation in Yemen has become increasingly complex. The escalation of the armed conflict in the north in August 2009 caused widespread displacement. More than 250,000 internally displaced persons have been receiving assistance and many more remain out of reach of humanitarian actors. The ceasefire in early 2010 raised hopes that internally displaced persons would be able to return, but its status remains fragile. A World Food Programme (WFP) food security survey highlighted that 1 in 3 Yemenis is acutely hungry, and more than 2.7 million are food insecure. Host communities, internally displaced persons and over 170,000 refugees from Somalia and Ethiopia are struggling as coping mechanisms erode and the need for water, sanitation, shelter and health care increases. In addition to widespread poverty, Yemen suffers from high food prices, erratic rainfall and rapid population growth.

21. Some humanitarian emergencies saw an improvement during the reporting period. Zimbabwe moved from a humanitarian crisis towards gradual recovery. Nonetheless, the humanitarian needs of thousands of displaced persons and

1.6 million orphaned children remained considerable, particularly in the areas of health, food security, water and sanitation. Over 2 million people required food aid during the hunger season. In Sri Lanka, the final phase of fighting between Government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam displaced approximately 300,000 people. Though a majority of internally displaced persons have returned to their districts of origin since late 2009, there remains a significant need to continue supporting internally displaced persons remaining in camps as well as returnees rebuilding their lives. In Colombia the number of internally displaced persons remains one of the highest in the world, ranging between 3.3 million and 4.9 million.

III. Current challenges

A. Operating in high-risk environments

22. The ability to obtain and maintain access to populations in need is the key prerequisite for national and international humanitarian agencies to discharge their primary mandates of delivering humanitarian assistance and providing measures of protection to populations in need, in a way that is consistent with the core humanitarian principles of impartiality, neutrality, humanity and independence. Alarmingly, this ability has been increasingly jeopardized, as both the overall level of threats and the number of deliberate attacks on aid organizations and their personnel, equipment, facilities and vehicles have risen significantly. Moreover, perceptions of affiliations with political and military agendas have eroded both the acceptance of humanitarian actors as impartial, neutral and independent and the protective nature of the emblems of the United Nations and of humanitarian organizations.

23. As highlighted during the commemoration of the first World Humanitarian Day on 19 August 2009, 260 humanitarian relief personnel were killed, kidnapped or seriously injured in 2008, compared with 69 in 1998. For the period of 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009 the Department of Safety and Security reported 27 casualties among United Nations civilian personnel and 36 among NGO personnel.

24. The reasons for such attacks on humanitarian personnel vary. The following broad patterns can be identified, as described below.

25. *Deliberate and targeted attacks on humanitarian operations for political and conflict-related reasons*. The main reasons seem to be that: (a) humanitarians are perceived to be affiliated to a party to conflict; (b) the organization itself may be the primary target, attacked for its actions or statements, particularly when these are considered to be "culturally intrusive"; or (c) to prevent the delivery of aid to a certain population group. For example, in Afghanistan armed opposition groups affiliated to the Taliban have threatened and sought to deter international organizations perceived as working closely with international military forces or the Government. Deliberate attacks and harassment of humanitarian personnel have also been of concern in contexts such as Iraq and Somalia, as well as in Pakistan, where, in October 2009, WFP premises were targeted.

26. *High levels of criminality and banditry*. This is common in areas where there is a pervasive breakdown in law and order, an incomplete demobilization or

fragmentation of armed groups, and where relief supplies are seen as lucrative soft targets or an opportunity to equip and supply armed groups. Humanitarian operations have been affected by these kinds of threats in Chad, the Central African Republic and the Sudan. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, humanitarian personnel in North Kivu experienced an average of 11 security incidents each month in 2009, including killings, kidnapping, physical assaults, carjacking, looting of relief items and burglary of premises. The trend worsened further in the early part of 2010. Recent data confirm an upsurge in the number of casualties suffered by contractors, particularly truck drivers.

27. *Indiscriminate and terrorist attacks.* In several operating environments, humanitarian personnel have been exposed to indiscriminate violence against civilian populations. Suicide attacks and the use of improvised explosive devices, often used in Afghanistan and Iraq, have affected humanitarian operations, even if they have not been targeted directly. Such attacks generally occur in populated areas or along major transport routes, likely to be frequented by humanitarian personnel.

28. *Active hostilities, including air strikes and ground operations.* Active combat operations pose obvious security and coordination challenges for humanitarian actors, particularly where parties to conflict may not live up to their obligations under international humanitarian law to allow and facilitate aid provision for populations affected by fighting and trapped in conflict zones. In 2009, active fighting restricted access to conflict-affected populations in contexts such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gaza, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Somalia and the Sudan. In Somalia, some 80,000 vulnerable persons, in Mogadishu alone, were repeatedly cut off from essential food aid for extended periods of time because of episodes of fighting.

Enabling practices for operating in high-risk environments

29. In order to provide assistance solely based on needs, it is important that humanitarian actors offer their services to affected populations by reaching out and engaging with all parties to a conflict, giving assurances as necessary that their conduct will be neutral, impartial and independent. This approach aims at enhancing the acceptance of humanitarian personnel by national and local authorities, communities and their leaders, and armed groups of all kinds, and helps reduce their vulnerability in insecure environments. Gaining such acceptance, however, requires a determined and long-term use of practices such as continuous outreach and confidence-building with local leaders, communities and authorities; direct and constant engagement with all parties to a conflict; clear disassociation from political and military goals; transparency regarding programmes and motivations; and careful analyses of the operating environment and the actors present in it.

30. Experience by humanitarian organizations operating in the "deep field" shows that long-standing engagement — before, during and after an emergency — is key in fostering acceptance among the communities being helped as well as among the parties to conflict, and in building up knowledge of the operating environment and effective networks with relevant stakeholders. Ingredients for successfully increasing acceptance also include delivering services that make a difference to communities, adapting to the operating environment in terms of visibility and footprint (use of emblems, marking of vehicles), using national and local capacities, and adhering to established codes of conduct. Structured engagement with all parties

to a conflict is also part of the Emergency Response Coordinator's mandate, as enshrined in General Assembly resolution 46/182, and has in many cases enabled the creation of additional security and access arrangements such as humanitarian corridors, days of tranquillity and temporary cessations of hostilities or so-called "humanitarian ceasefires". In the context of Afghanistan, for example, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Health Organization and other humanitarian partners have successfully coordinated days of tranquillity for immunization campaigns, with the endorsement of the Taliban.

31. While more efforts are needed to strengthen the acceptance of humanitarian agencies and to manage the expectations of Governments, beneficiaries and donors accordingly, experience also suggests the need to complement such efforts with sound security management that includes comprehensive information collection and localized risk and threat analysis in order to maintain the ability of agencies to operate as well as practical security measures where necessary. The new United Nations security management approach aims to support the ability of humanitarian operations to maintain their presence and operations. The report of the Independent Panel on Safety and Security of United Nations Personnel and Premises Worldwide encouraged the principle of "no programme without security", in which security is an integral part of programming. This acknowledges and reinforces the importance of effective security management strategies, with sufficient capacity and capability on the ground. However, the continued lack of adequate, predictable and sustained funding for operational security, down to the district levels, often undermines the ability of the Department of Safety and Security to support programme delivery more effectively in complex security environments.

32. In order to maintain the ability to operate in high-risk environments, and to work with local communities and their leaders, many humanitarian agencies have repeatedly resorted to funding security management through humanitarian appeals. However, even this is only partially effective. Security remains one of the most commonly under-funded components of consolidated appeals. For example, only 35 per cent of security requirements were funded for 2009. As a result, the Central Emergency Response Fund has seen increased requests for short-term grants in support of the security management components of humanitarian response. However, security risk management that effectively enables humanitarian action requires long-term investment from Member States and cannot be sustained through short-term and ad hoc security funding.

33. Further efforts have also been made to enhance the "Saving Lives Together" framework which strengthens security collaboration between the United Nations, international organizations and NGOs through information exchange and the sharing of best practices. To support its implementation, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Steering Group on Security established a task force comprised of United Nations and NGO staff led by the Department of Safety and Security. In the field, the framework continued to be implemented as a standard element of the humanitarian structure.

34. Building acceptance of humanitarian operations is of fundamental importance to the ability of agencies to operate in high-risk environments and to carry out their mandates. It is also critical to identify and cultivate practices that allow agencies to stay rather than operate remotely or not operate at all. In this regard, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has commissioned an independent review

of good practices and lessons learned concerning initiatives, mechanisms, procedures and arrangements in the field that have enabled humanitarian agencies to continue operating in high-risk environments. The study is expected to be finalized in December 2010 and will make recommendations on strategic approaches and practical modalities to safeguard the ability to carry out humanitarian operations wherever they are needed, supported by the new security management approach developed by the Department of Safety and Security.

B. Vulnerability and humanitarian need

35. Today's humanitarian response system, as it has evolved over the past decades, is primarily prompted by so-called "shock-driven" events such as conflict or sudden-onset natural disasters. However, trigger mechanisms are far less developed with regard to slow-onset disasters, such as droughts, or more structural crises emanating from global challenges such as the financial, food or energy crises. Moreover, there is little established understanding of mechanisms to respond to acute humanitarian needs within overall developmental contexts, challenging the humanitarian community's compliance with the core principle of humanity, which calls for a response to humanitarian needs wherever they are found, irrespective of their origin.

36. To meet humanitarian needs more equitably, a shift within the humanitarian system from a "shock-driven" towards a more needs-based and vulnerability-led response would need to be considered. This involves the recognition that humanitarian needs may arise not only in situations declared as "humanitarian emergencies" but also in contexts that are developmental, where a gradual increase of vulnerability would not necessarily lead to the designation as a humanitarian crisis. While such a shift does not suggest discontinuing the use of shocks as triggers and established humanitarian response mechanisms, it would require the international humanitarian community to develop a clearer approach to respond to situations of chronic and acute vulnerability, including system-wide, multi-hazard indicators and effective monitoring systems able to capture how the confluence of global challenges with pre-existing vulnerabilities is increasing humanitarian need, and to identify "tipping points". However, there also has to be a recognition that the existing humanitarian system, with its current level of resources, may not be able to deal with all needs identified. It is, therefore, important for humanitarian and development actors to combine their efforts in new ways.

Global challenges as drivers of humanitarian need and vulnerability

37. Analyses of where humanitarian needs have intensified or increased suggest three trends: (a) the severity of existing chronic vulnerabilities may be exacerbated by the impact of global challenges and increased frequency and/or magnitude of natural disasters leading to additional acute vulnerabilities and humanitarian caseloads; (b) humanitarian caseloads may be widened to encompass new beneficiaries as vulnerability spreads, for example among underserved beneficiaries such as the urban poor; and (c) acute humanitarian need may coexist with chronic underdevelopment, requiring temporary humanitarian action as well as continuing development efforts.

38. Examples abound where the coincidence of global challenges is creating or exacerbating humanitarian need. In 2008-2009, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, two countries of medium ranking on the human development index and thus considered development contexts, demonstrated how even the temporary coincidence of severe food, water and energy insecurity at the local level with global factors, such as high food and fuel prices and the global economic slowdown, can create acute humanitarian need. The Niger offers an example of a slow-onset context where, under the pressure of multiple global challenges such as chronic poverty, environmental degradation, high population growth, desertification, drought, severe water scarcity and other climatic impacts on agriculture and food security, chronic needs have escalated into acute humanitarian needs. According to a December 2009 survey, approximately 7.8 million people face extreme food shortages. Perceived as a developmental context, however, the Niger has had difficulty in mobilizing humanitarian resources. Recently, the High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis mobilized engagement from Member States, the Economic Community of West African States and humanitarian agencies to combat food insecurity in the Sahel, with the aim of progress towards commercial food-sharing within the region. Kenya provides another example of multiple global challenges fuelling vulnerability and humanitarian need, not only among rural populations and internally displaced communities of people, but also among the poorest in urban slums, for whom failed rains and subsequent drought and water scarcity induce continuous migrations.

The way forward: from a shock-driven to a more needs-based response

39. The trends illustrated above call for more emphasis on prevention and preparedness, better monitoring, assessment and analysis of acute vulnerability across multiple sectors, and closer partnership with Governments, development partners and organizations with the capability to analyse global trends and their impact on vulnerability. This will facilitate adaptation to contexts where entry and exit strategies for humanitarian relief may be harder to define and help develop understanding of global and regional tipping points, ultimately enabling a more effective and timely response to situations of increasing vulnerability.

40. Operationally, this shift from a shock-driven to a needs-based response requires a humanitarian system that is able to: (a) contribute to reducing vulnerability and strengthening resilience through improved risk reduction and preparedness; (b) improve modalities for the monitoring and identification of acute humanitarian vulnerability and need; and (c) strengthen partnerships with Government, development and other actors to engage in knowledge transfer and early analysis of potential implications (as currently exemplified in the field of early recovery). While there may be reluctance to acknowledge the existence of humanitarian needs, for fear of loss of investment profile and development funding, an earlier detection of emerging humanitarian needs, based on a system of reliable indicators, will allow United Nations resident coordinators to bring such needs to the attention of Governments early on, and design, in close consultation with relevant authorities and local communities, an adequate, timely and effective response, in support of existing overall development frameworks.

41. A number of inter-agency activities are already contributing to better identifying and monitoring humanitarian vulnerability and trigger mechanisms for response. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee "Early Warning – Early Action"

report synthesizes real-time information from humanitarian sources on the ground and offers a tool for emergency managers to monitor persistent and emerging threats, particularly those emanating from slow-onset events. In 2009, it tracked deteriorating humanitarian conditions in Kyrgyzstan, the Niger and Yemen, thereby enabling the humanitarian community to help mitigate the crises through high-level advocacy by the Emergency Response Coordinator, contingency planning and the pre-positioning of relief stockpiles. A number of humanitarian actors are also employing internal vulnerability monitoring tools. For example, the Global Focus Model of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs analyses hazards, factors for vulnerability and response capacities at the country level by applying a range of quantitative indicators.

42. Good assessment of national capacities and coping mechanisms of affected populations is also an essential component of effective response. Within the United Nations and in cooperation with the World Bank, the development of an integrated Global Impact and Vulnerability Alert System (GIVAS) is under way. It will provide a platform for gathering and analysing real-time data to identify triggers of vulnerability, particularly in the aftermath of exogenous shocks such as the financial crisis, and to launch advocacy efforts. A recent regional initiative in western Sahel employed the expertise of the Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping unit of WFP to develop maps aimed at pinpointing pockets of acute need by capturing data from comprehensive household surveys. The aim of such initiatives is to support an earlier and more accurate identification of humanitarian need and trigger more timely and effective responses.

43. Closer partnerships between humanitarian and development actors to fill knowledge gaps on the impacts of global challenges and to combine efforts and resources are essential to ensure that humanitarian needs in multi-hazard and slow-onset contexts are addressed. Partnerships with non-traditional developmental partners, such as the International Energy Agency, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank or the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, would offer extra analytical and technical expertise on certain global challenges, including analysis of threshold indicators. Two recent examples of such partnerships include coordinated efforts to combat the 2008-2009 food crisis and fast-track climate change adaptation measures in high-risk settings. The High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis called for a simultaneous, rather than sequential, engagement of humanitarian and development actors to address jointly the immediate needs of food-insecure communities as well as the longer-term structural causes of this insecurity. Humanitarian agencies have also enhanced efforts to integrate their response and preparedness activities into climate change adaptation measures and thereby improve the resilience of vulnerable communities to climate change through capacity development initiatives. Examples of such initiatives include support to government endeavours to rehabilitate land and water resources in food-insecure areas and food-for-work initiatives involving community-level climate adaptation activities.

44. Strengthening the humanitarian response system, which has developed over decades primarily around events, to better address structural vulnerabilities in support of Governments, will take some time. Progress in information and assessment technology and techniques can support this shift, which could catalyse a more systematic engagement of relevant actors by influencing their organizational prioritization and mobilizing humanitarian funding and high-level advocacy.

However, there is a need for further clarification of the implications of such an approach with host Governments, donors and beneficiary communities, bearing in mind national contexts and potential sensitivities.

IV. Progress in the coordination of humanitarian assistance

A. Strengthening the coordination of humanitarian assistance

Capacity and coordination in the field

45. The United Nations and its humanitarian partners are continuing their efforts to ensure a coordinated, predictable and accountable humanitarian response capacity. At the global level, the humanitarian architecture has been further strengthened through improved response preparedness across all global clusters, further development of surge rosters, tools and standards to support the field, significant advances in mainstreaming cluster roles and responsibilities within cluster lead agencies, and the development of Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidance, including on the establishment of humanitarian country teams, involving equal partnerships between United Nations and non-United Nations actors.

46. At the field level, coordination capacity has been strengthened through the provision of training for heads of agencies and cluster coordinators, building their capacity to lead and guide effective humanitarian action. The cluster approach[1] is now used in almost all countries with humanitarian coordinators, allowing host Governments and local authorities a "one-stop shop" approach with the humanitarian community through clear entry points into the system. Cluster coordination mechanisms are also systematically established for new emergencies involving large-scale international responses, as well as in new crises within chronic emergencies.

47. An independent evaluation, assessing the operational effectiveness and main outcomes of the cluster approach, was completed in early 2010. It concluded that while the cluster approach had proven to be a worthwhile investment, humanitarian organizations should continue to improve its implementation. Overall, cluster coordination mechanisms had contributed to better identification of response gaps and to reducing incidence of duplications, to a more effective coverage of needs, to predictable leadership in sectoral response and to stronger and more inclusive partnerships between United Nations and non-United Nations actors. The evaluation also noted the potential of the cluster approach to further improve humanitarian response and increase benefits for affected populations. It made a number of recommendations as to how cluster implementation could be strengthened to achieve its full potential, including by ensuring that clusters at the field level were adequately coordinated with community and national structures and that they build on national capacities; by better incorporating multidimensional and cross-cutting issues in humanitarian responses such as gender, age, environment and HIV/AIDS; and by improving inter-cluster coordination. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee

[1] The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is not taking part in the cluster approach. Nevertheless, coordination between ICRC and the United Nations continues to ensure operational complementarity and strengthened response for people affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence.

is presently preparing a management response plan to ensure the implementation of the evaluation's recommendations.

Enhanced humanitarian coordination: the resident and humanitarian coordinator system

48. Strengthening humanitarian leadership in the field remains high on the agenda of humanitarian actors. Progress was made in three key areas: revamping the normative basis of the humanitarian coordination leadership function; enhancing the knowledge of humanitarian coordination tools and requirements among resident coordinators, humanitarian coordinators, deputy humanitarian coordinators and members of the humanitarian coordination pool; and increasing the number of qualified candidates for humanitarian coordination leadership positions. Since the humanitarian coordination leadership function is largely anchored to the resident coordinator system, stronger links were also established with the resident coordinator system supported by the Development Operations Coordination Office.

49. Recognizing that the pool of candidates qualifying for humanitarian coordination leadership positions was insufficient, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee established a humanitarian coordination pool in July 2009. The Emergency Response Coordinator may select from this pool candidates for positions as designated humanitarian coordinators, deputy humanitarian coordinators, or for other humanitarian coordination leadership positions as appropriate. As at March 2010, the pool included 27 qualified individuals from 10 different agencies, of whom 4 are from non-United Nations backgrounds. The pool also feeds into the resident coordinator selection process. The Emergency Response Coordinator may draw from the pool candidates for positions in countries where resident coordinators are also designated as humanitarian coordinators or where they are likely to have to perform humanitarian coordination functions on an irregular basis.

50. As a result of those and other efforts, expectations from humanitarian partners of the humanitarian coordination leadership function have become clearer and more convergent; humanitarian coordination leaders became better equipped to perform humanitarian coordination functions; and the pool of potential candidates for humanitarian coordination leadership positions has become larger, allowing for greater choice in the selection of candidates.

Predictability of response: humanitarian financing

51. To be effective in response, humanitarian financing should be timely and targeted where needs are greatest. Despite the global economic downturn in 2009, the United Nations humanitarian financing system continued to grow, and more importantly, to become increasingly effective and accountable. Pooled funds continue to be a useful tool in facilitating rapid response and immediate life-saving assistance, particularly the Central Emergency Response Fund, country-based pooled funds (common humanitarian funds and emergency response funds) and other humanitarian financing mechanisms such as the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

52. Contributions to the consolidated appeals process reached $6.9 billion in 2009, nearly double the amount raised two years earlier, yet significant discrepancies persist in the level of funding across sectors. While funding for the Central Emergency Response Fund dropped from $453 million in 2008 to $401 million in

2009, the decrease was due largely to fluctuations in global currency exchange rates. Some 22 Member States increased their contributions in their national currencies, while another 17 countries joined the ranks of Central Emergency Response Fund donors in 2009, bringing the total number of Member States that have contributed to the Fund to 117. Levels of funding for country-based pooled funds also decreased from $407 million in 2008 to $339 million in 2009. Five new country-based emergency response funds were established in the reporting period, bringing the total to 18.

53. All of these funding mechanisms continued to focus on further improving their effectiveness and accountability. For the Central Emergency Response Fund and the consolidated appeals process, accountability measures were strengthened by developing a draft performance and accountability framework and piloting reporting outcomes by clusters. Monitoring systems were further strengthened for country-based pooled funds in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Iraq and the occupied Palestinian territories. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs also strengthened its capacity for administering these funds by establishing a dedicated administrative unit in Geneva.

Harmonizing needs assessments

54. Credible needs assessments are essential to improve the effectiveness and accuracy of aid delivery to beneficiaries and of accountability to stakeholders. They are also a prerequisite for moving from a supply-driven to a more needs-based humanitarian system. The United Nations and its partners continued efforts to harmonize and consolidate their needs assessments and strengthen their information management capacities and collection, including analysis of gender- and age-disaggregated data. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Force on Needs Assessment, in consultation with the Committee's Task Force on Information Management, developed operational guidance and indicators for cross-sectoral needs assessments, strengthened capacities within the humanitarian community by developing a standby capacity of experts to support needs assessments in the early phases of a response, and developed a tool for consolidating and presenting humanitarian information.

55. As a result, the Task Force on Needs Assessment has produced a guidance package with a set of key indicators for assessments; a web-based toolbox that consolidates more than 100 needs assessment tools and guidance documents to facilitate easy access for practitioners at the field level; and a multisectoral tool that consolidates core humanitarian information for humanitarian country teams in a consistent and accessible manner, referred to as the "humanitarian dashboard". This tool, which is still being developed, will support the cluster approach by providing a framework to consolidate agency-specific needs assessment information into a format that allows consolidation of needs across clusters, and gap and trend analysis, benefiting humanitarian country teams and other key humanitarian stakeholders.

Partnerships

56. The third meeting of the Global Humanitarian Platform was held in February 2010 in Geneva and brought together 11 participants from the United Nations, other intergovernmental bodies and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent

Movement along with 31 NGOs, of which many are based in developing countries in Africa and Asia. This year's meeting provided an opportunity for the humanitarian community to take stock of progress in terms of partnership. Since 2006, the "principles of partnership" have been disseminated and gradually operationalized at the global and field level within the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the broader NGO community. Participants welcomed the broadened and increasingly inclusive humanitarian country teams. The main topics discussed included the ability to provide assistance safely and in a principled manner as well as relevant guidelines and approaches for civil-military coordination. The meeting also discussed the need for a "new humanitarian business model" that would reduce the "footprint" of the international humanitarian system and invest more in capacity development of national and local actors, so as to place them, particularly at the community level, at the centre of humanitarian action.

Capacity-building for humanitarian response preparedness

57. Response preparedness is a prerequisite for rapid, predictable and effective delivery of humanitarian relief, and involves a range of activities at the local, national and global levels. Within the broad category of response preparedness, the primary focus of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is on coordinating international humanitarian response preparedness. This includes improving the Office's readiness to respond, helping the international humanitarian system be better prepared to respond, and working with national authorities and national civil society so they are better prepared to request, receive and collaborate with the international humanitarian assistance provided.

58. A broad group of United Nations agencies, humanitarian organizations and NGOs are supporting response preparedness activities that are aimed at strengthening government capacities to respond to humanitarian emergencies. Currently, the main United Nations mechanisms and efforts to strengthen response capacities include: the Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative, the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group, disaster assessment and coordination preparedness missions, the thematic platform on disaster risk reduction for health and regular capacity-building exercises, training events and dissemination of guidance on emergency preparedness. The United Nations also continued its cooperation with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in encouraging and supporting Governments to make use of the Guidelines for the Domestic Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance.

59. The Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative, an inter-agency programme involving the United Nations Development Programme, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, supports the strengthening of government capacities to respond internally by providing advisory services, guidance development and dissemination, training and facilitation, knowledge exchange and networking for the benefit of national, regional and international partners. The Initiative undertook activities in support of national actors in Jamaica, Kenya and Namibia, and of 12 national disaster management authorities in Eastern Europe. Upon request from national authorities, humanitarian country teams also conducted a number of capacity-building exercises in Asia, including in Bhutan, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Thailand and Viet Nam. The Initiative sees these response preparedness activities as

part of a broad package of efforts to reduce the risk of disasters, which also include activities to mitigate the effects of natural hazards, such as promoting better building codes.

60. To strengthen government capacities to respond, the United Nations in West Africa supported national disaster preparedness plans in Ghana, Senegal and Togo and the establishment of joint crisis management systems in Benin, Ghana and Nigeria. At the regional level, capacity-building activities with the African Union included efforts to strengthen its capacities to respond to natural disasters, to manage humanitarian funds and to support the development of guidelines on civil-military coordination and the protection of civilians.

Emergency rules and procedures of the Secretariat for rapid humanitarian response

61. Rapid response is crucial in humanitarian emergencies. Experience from earthquakes, for example, shows that the chance of saving lives decreases significantly after the first 72 hours. Taking this into account, the General Assembly, in its resolution 46/182, requested the United Nations to develop special rules and procedures to enable the rapid recruitment of emergency staff, procurement of supplies and equipment and disbursement of emergency funds. In its resolution 64/76, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report on the extent to which current rules and procedures of the Secretariat were compatible with this imperative (see also paras. 47-49 above).

62. The primary surge response capacity for the coordination of humanitarian assistance within the Secretariat is provided by regional offices of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, supported by the Office's personnel deployment mechanisms such as the Emergency Response Roster and the Standby-Partnerships Programme. These have become increasingly effective and timely. However, many current procedures of the Secretariat, developed largely to respond to needs of a headquarters-based organization servicing intergovernmental bodies, are not readily transferable for the needs of a field-based, rapid response body such as the Office. They therefore tend to delay the rapid recruitment of staff for an emergency response. As an interim measure, the Secretariat, in accordance with official procedures, has piloted a roster for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to facilitate field recruitments. This allows staff to be selected from a pool of qualified and pre-screened candidates in different functional areas, hence shortening the recruitment period. For the response to the earthquake in Haiti, the Secretariat also adopted special measures allowing the rapid recruitment of additional external candidates on fixed-term appointments. However, these measures remain ad hoc and a standardization of procedures for the rapid recruitment of staff for emergency responses is needed.

63. In order for staff in the field to be operational they also need to be adequately and rapidly equipped. However, current administrative procedures for procurement and logistical support of the Secretariat are not designed for emergency situations and may lead to delays. As a mitigation measure, the Office established a small centralized rapid deployment stock, which allows for an immediate mobilization of some equipment. However, additional improvements are necessary and to that end the Office is seeking a further delegation of authority for procurement and also

working to establish more systematic cooperation with the Department of Field Support.

B. Addressing gender equality and prevention of and response to gender-based violence in humanitarian action

64. Strengthening coordination, accountability and capacity for programmes to promote gender equality and combat gender-based violence remains a priority for the humanitarian community. Gender Advisers have provided technical support to mainstreaming gender in 25 emergencies and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee has developed a set of tools and guidance to streamline gender into humanitarian relief efforts and strengthen coordination regarding gender-based violence.

65. For example, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee has launched a gender marker tool that measures, on a scale from 0-3, whether a humanitarian project is designed well enough to address gender equality or reduce discrimination and inequalities based on gender. This tool will allow better tracking of funding allocations to gender and gender-based violence programming in any humanitarian appeal or funding mechanism, including CAPs, CERFs and pooled funds, and support cluster actors in their efforts to integrate gender into their strategies. A tool for better gender tracking during the recovery phase is also being developed.

66. In March 2010, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee also launched an online course entitled "Different needs, equal opportunities: increasing effectiveness of humanitarian action for women, girls, boys and men", to strengthen capacities of humanitarian staff to effectively integrate gender into humanitarian programmes. The course is based on the Committee's Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action and the Guidelines for Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings. Humanitarian organizations are encouraged to adopt it as a compulsory part of staff learning.

67. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee has further endorsed a set of multisectoral guidance tools on cooking fuel strategies that identifies key activities for clusters or agencies and determines appropriate household energy strategies, in an effort to reduce the risk to the safety and security of displaced populations, in particular women and girls, when collecting and using firewood in insecure humanitarian settings.

68. The efforts of the United Nations system to prevent gender-based violence have been further advanced. The appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict in February 2010 is expected to intensify global advocacy and action regarding war-related sexual violence. In this regard, the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict initiative brought together the programming and protection strategies of humanitarian actors with the prevention, human rights and security work of peacekeeping missions and rule of law initiatives in Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan. Meanwhile, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee developed a gender-based violence coordinator's handbook and provided support to the field on data collection and the roll-out of standard operating procedures for multisectoral gender-based violence coordination.

C. Update on the new international humanitarian order

69. In response to resolution 63/147, in which the General Assembly requested reports on issues pertaining to the new international humanitarian order, it is worth noting that the international humanitarian system has evolved and adapted to the current challenges by adopting the recommendations discussed under this agenda item, including through implementation of resolution 46/182, which laid the foundation for the current coordination framework of the United Nations.

70. While many of the issues pertaining to the coordination of humanitarian assistance are addressed in other sections of the present report, the resolution particularly highlights the efforts of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, regional organizations, civil society, NGOs and the private sector in the field of humanitarian assistance and the prevention of humanitarian crises, and calls for stronger cooperation in this regard. While the Global Humanitarian Platform and the Committee have proven to be robust mechanisms, Member States are invited to reflect on how to strengthen further engagement with civil society, including national NGOs and the private sector.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

71. **On the basis of the above, I encourage Member States to consider the following:**

(a) **Member States, non-State actors and humanitarian organizations are urged to promote greater respect for, and adherence to, the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence;**

(b) **Safe, timely and unhindered access to vulnerable populations is a prerequisite for the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance. States are urged to facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian personnel and supplies to affected communities;**

(c) **The United Nations system and humanitarian partners are urged to strengthen measures that support the ability to maintain humanitarian presence and operations in high-risk environments in a principled manner, including through fostering greater acceptance of humanitarian actors by all parties to conflict;**

(d) **Member States are urged to reinforce their commitment to and investment in further strengthening the United Nations security management system;**

(e) **Member States, the United Nations system and both humanitarian and development partners are encouraged to further develop their mechanisms to effectively detect and address humanitarian needs arising from global challenges and other structural or chronic vulnerabilities through stronger partnerships, clearer indicators, the coordinated monitoring of vulnerabilities, of effective trigger mechanisms for response and of strengthened preparedness, and risk reduction at all levels;**

(f) Member States, the United Nations system and partners are encouraged to further strengthen national and local capacities and preparedness for responding to humanitarian emergencies;

(g) Member States are called upon to maintain a diversity of humanitarian funding channels, and to provide consistent and predictable support to these channels to meet existing and growing humanitarian needs. This includes the provision of early and multi-year commitments to humanitarian pooled funds as well as support to humanitarian agencies' individual emergency reserves and other traditional sources of funding for humanitarian programmes;

(h) The United Nations will continue its efforts to strengthen its ability to recruit and deploy staff quickly and flexibly, and to procure emergency relief materials rapidly and cost-effectively in order to support Governments and United Nations country teams in the coordination of international humanitarian assistance in the immediate aftermath of disasters;

(i) Member States are urged to strengthen efforts to address sexual and other forms of gender-based violence, including by preventing, investigating and prosecuting such violence in humanitarian emergencies, and to help the United Nations system and humanitarian partners to strengthen multisectoral coordination to address gender-based violence;

(j) The United Nations and humanitarian partners are encouraged to implement gender marker tools in humanitarian funding mechanisms in order to track funding allocations to gender and gender-based violence programming;

(k) In order to strengthen the new international humanitarian order, Member States are encouraged to further the engagement of civil society, particularly national NGOs, in humanitarian assistance.